

I told him, walked on through to waiting area with wife, we sat on outside bench, black fellow with a limp came up, said, "hey, man, how's it going?" I answered, "fine, bro, you makin' it?" "no problem," he said, then walked off to dry down a caddy. "these people know you?" my wife asked. "no." "how come they talk to you?" "they like me, people have always liked me, it's my cross." then our car was finished, fellow flipped his rag toward me, we got up, got to the car, I slipped him a buck, we got in, I started the engine, the foreman walked up, big guy with dark shades, huge guy, he smiled a big one, "good to see you, man!" I smiled back, "thanks, but it's your party, man!" I pulled out into traffic, "they know you," said my wife. "sure," I said, "I've been there."

MY NON-AMBITION AMBITION

my father had little sayings which he mostly emitted during dinner sessions; food made him think of survival:

"succeed or suck eggs ..."

"the early bird gets the worm ..."

"early to bed and early to rise makes a man (etc.) ..."

"anybody who wants to can make it in America ..."

"God takes care of those who (etc.)"

I had no particular idea who he was talking to, and personally I thought of him as a crazed and stupid brute but my mother always interspersed during these sessions: "Henry, you listen to your father."

at that age I didn't have much other choice but as the food went down with the sayings, the appetite and the digestion went along with them.

it seemed to me that I had never met
another person on earth
as discouraging to my happiness
as my father.

and it appeared that I had
the same effect upon
him.

"you are a bum," he told me, "and you'll
always be a bum!"

and I thought, if being a bum is to be the
opposite of what this son of a bitch
is, then that's what I'm going to
be.

and it's too bad he's been dead
so long
for now he can't see
how beautifully I've succeeded
at
that.

DING-DONG

he came over with a rag around his
head, it was tied around his head
and a large segment of that rag
dangled down by his side
like a bell-cord
and it often got in his way
as he tried to light a cigarette
or lift his drink.

his girlfriend was dressed in an
all-fur outfit
that came down and covered her
feet.
her eyes were large and nice
but seemed always near
tears.
but she was
quiet.

he wasn't.

he jumped up often
spilling his drink against his
mod shirt
and he was six feet four and
worse than a bore.